



## THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER **SPRING, 2011**

### *From the President:*

First of all, I'd like to thank you for electing me President of the Georgetown Historical Society for 2011. I am thrilled that during my term we will begin observing the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War. We are planning a special Civil War exhibit at the Brocklebank Museum, so if you haven't visited in a while, please stop by this summer! We are still looking for additional Civil War items to be loaned or donated for the display, so please contact us if you have anything or are willing to help. Also, check out the *Georgetown Record*. The first issue of each month will include a GHS article on "Georgetown in the Civil War."

The Executive Board has been hard at work trying to redistribute the GHS duties of Board member Barry Crawford, who is being deployed to Afghanistan later this year. We are very pleased to announce that Kathy Sachs has agreed to take on the position of Interim Treasurer while Barry is away. Kathy is a Certified Financial Planner and a long-time member of the Georgetown Historical Society. She has been actively involved in town affairs, including making history herself by becoming the first woman ever elected to the Georgetown Board of Selectmen. We welcome Kathy to the Executive Board and look forward to working with her.

We also welcome Nicholas Philpot, who will be working with us as a volunteer intern this

summer. Nick is a graduate of Georgetown High School, and is now a junior majoring in history at Grove City College in Pennsylvania. Nick will be designing our new Civil War display, as well as assisting with the Digital Archives Program.

There are still plenty of other volunteer positions available, such as helping at the museum and special events, archives management, on-line merchandise sales, newsletter, etc. Please contact us at the e-mail address below if you are willing to help. With warm weather just around the corner (we hope!), we will begin planning some weekend Spring Cleaning work parties at the museum. Many hands help lighten the load (and make it more fun!), so we hope you might consider dropping in for a few hours to help. Watch your e-mail for dates and times.

We are currently running a membership drive, with the goal of substantially increasing our membership. You can help by inviting your family and friends to join GHS. Membership Applications can be downloaded from our website at [www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com). **If you have not yet paid your GHS dues for 2011, please do so soon.**

We love hearing from you! If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, or would like to volunteer to help in any way, please e-mail us at: [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

*Christine Comiskey*

## REMEMBERING HOMER TAPIN, Louise Richardson

Homer K. Tapin (January 10, 1916 – January 3, 2011) was a Charter member and Founder of the Georgetown Historical Society. We are indebted to him for his many years of preservation service to and presenting the history of Georgetown. A celebration of life was held in his memory on April 2, 2011 at the First Congregational Church in town.

In addition, as a member of the last graduating class from the Perley Free School in 1934, Homer and other graduates were honored at Georgetown High School's graduation ceremony in 2009. And, Homer is pictured on page 61 in GHS's *Images of America Series, Georgetown* book, when he served as Chairman of the Trustees of the Peabody Library.



Homer Tapin with author John Updike, who once lived in Georgetown. Courtesy, Georgetown Record.

In 2008, GHS established the Homer K. Tapin Scholarship given to a Georgetown High School graduate who will pursue a degree relating to history, historic research/writing, or historic preservation. Previous awards have been given to Chelsea Fritschy, Michelle Prior, and Samantha Nadeau. GHS welcomes and appreciates memorial gifts in Homer's name to continue this worthy student scholarship. Please send your gift to Georgetown Historical society, P.O. Box 376, Georgetown, MA 01833.



## GEORGETOWN: *What's in a Name?* By Christine Comiskey

We regularly get inquiries from people all over the country looking for genealogical or other historical information, and we are always happy to help. However, sometimes we just can't find the answer, and it is often because they are contacting the wrong Georgetown Historical Society. We have gotten inquiries about Georgetown, Maine, South Carolina, Colorado, DC and others. My favorite was the group of adults looking for our Halloween "Tragedies and Tombstones" Union Cemetery tour. They contacted me several times by e-mail asking questions about the tour, which I answered. However, on the day of the tour, they asked, "Where are you? We can't find you?" As it turned out, they were driving around Georgetown, DC! (Fortunately, they had a good sense of humor.)

In fact, the majority of states in our country have a city or town by that name. Many were named after King George or George Washington, while others were named after notable locals named

George. Contrary to popular belief, Georgetown, Massachusetts was NOT named by a committee of townsmen named George. This popular myth came from a comedy skit that was written and performed for Georgetown's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1938, poking fun at the fact that nobody knew how the town got its name. According to the Rowley records, the committee for separation was made up of a group of men (none named George!) from Rowley First Parish, Rowley Second Parish (now Georgetown),

and Byfield Parish. Unable to agree on some of the issues, they voted to leave them up to the State Legislature to decide. It appears that the choosing of a name may have been one of those issues.

Perhaps somewhere in Boston's old archives, somebody will someday find the answer to the old question, "How did Georgetown get its name?" Perhaps inspired by one for whom they named a west coast town: "George, Washington?!"

### *Curator's Corner, Steve Keene:* *HICKORY TREE WILD ANIMAL FARM*



Satan the Tiger of Hickory Tree Wild Animal Farm. Photo ca. 1940. Courtesy of Joan Tramer Llorente.

The Digital Archive known as the Hickory Tree Wild Animal Farm got under way with a meeting at "the office" on Tuesday, March 15, 2011 where Chris Comisky and Steve Keene met with and spent much of the day with Joan Tramer Llorente of Brunswick Maine and Renee Llorente, her daughter who lives in Groveland. Jones's spirited enthusiasm belies the fact she is about to become an

octogenarian. She beamed when presented with copies of 4 H.S. photographs showing Jewel, the elephant, and her trainer, Wavy, paying a visit to Watson's restaurant down town at the square c. 1938 - 1939. Joan said she had frequently heard of the trip, but, until now, had not seen confirming evidence. She told us the two had a fine time paying the visit and that Wavy had imbibed sufficiently that for the trip back to the farm he walked behind Jewel rather than try to ride her.

Joan brought goodies in a 4 inch thick leather valise ("valise" was once defined as "a personal memory manager -- makes your memory permanent and portable, you will never forget anything (people, things, time, money) again!").

It's certainly that to Joan and Renee, and we are very happy they are willing to share it. The valise contained 21 cardboard sheets on which as few as 2, or as many as 12 photographs were stapled or pasted. The pictures included many circus animals, celebrities, including some Democrats who presented the farm a donkey named "Eleanor" to counter Republican enthusiasm for the farm's elephants. Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, Frank "bring em back alive" Buck and many local country and western performers and singers helped round out a clan of celebrities.

Assembling the archive began with photographing each of the album "Cards." First a picture of the entire card and then photos of each of the attached pictures were made. Sorting the collection by card seems to be a good beginning that will facilitate final organization. In addition to the cards there

was an envelope containing miscellaneous photos; a sizable package of newspaper clippings (not yet carefully inspected or photographed or scanned); copies of newspapers, especially papers reporting the massive 1970 fire, long after the wild animal farm had closed, that destroyed the largest barn on the property - then owned by the Woodman family.

At present the archive is built upon the 21 album pages, scans of the newspapers articles about the fire, the miscellaneous photos and a copy of the Ipswich Sylvania plant's house publication (of 1968), one fourth of which celebrated Gus Tramer. We learn that Gus grew up in New Jersey and quickly developed an interest in acting; that he was swept off his feet by Connie Kimball a New Hampshire girl from Georgetown. In partnership with Charles Phalan of Ipswich, Hickory Tree Wild Animal Farm was formed.. It was doing quite well through the late 1930's, but WW II, especially gas rationing devastated attendance at the wild animal farm and Gus Tramer went to work at a Sylvania plant in Ipswich to support the war effort. He worked there more than 25 years before he retired.

The archive presently has 143 records - with the clippings and a newspaper collection still to be added.



Jewel, the elephant, and her trainer, Wavy, paying a visit to Watson's restaurant down town at the square c. 1938 – 1939. Courtesy of Donald E. Gordon, former President of Georgetown Historical Society.

## GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

September 16 – 18 *Trails and Sails* weekend

September 23 – 25 *Georgetown Days and Trails and Sails* Weekend

Museum Open House

Ice Cream Sale

Scavenger Hunt

Cemetery Tours

October 22 & 23 and 29 & 30 *Tragedies and Tombstones* Cemetery Tours

November Attic Treasures Discovery Night

December Annual Meeting



## SESQUICENTENNIAL OF THE CIVIL WAR.

GHS is planning a special Civil War exhibit at the Brocklebank Museum. We are still looking for additional Civil War items to be loaned or donated for the display, so please contact us if you have any. Volunteers to help are welcome!



## GHS is “Going Green”

The Georgetown Historical Society can already be considered environmentally friendly. We use very little water and electricity, and don't generate a lot of waste. However, there is always room for improvement. We are now recycling, and are looking for two recycle bins, one for the museum and one for the office. If you have one or two that you would be willing to donate now that you no longer have to sort your own recyclables, please contact us at [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

Another way to help us go green is to get on our e-newsletter list. If you are still receiving this newsletter by mail and would be willing to get it by e-mail, thereby reducing waste *and* saving us money, please contact us at the above e-mail address.

Our early American ancestors were, by necessity, quite thrifty, re-used everything possible and created little waste. We urge all our members to go green and reduce their carbon footprint.



*John B. Weston*



## Picket Pins and Sabers

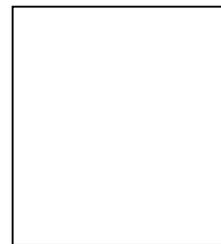
Author Nancy D. Frost has kindly donated a case of her Civil War book *Picket Pins and Sabers* to the Georgetown Historical Society. This wonderful book contains the letters of Civil War soldier John Burden Weston to his family here in Georgetown. It vividly describes his time in the Union Cavalry, from mundane duties to epic battles. A sample "... there are Hundreds of troops here that have to lie on the bare ground out of doors I have got a little used to the hardships of a soldiers life and I can sleep on the floor with my sabre and knapsack on with my minie rifle by my side loaded all of the time as well as I can in bed."

This hard-to-find First Edition collectible is a must for any Civil War buff, and can be found online for over \$100. We are offering our limited supply first to you, our valued members, before making it available to the general public. Priced at only \$20, we don't expect these books to last long. Don't miss out—order yours today! Contact us at [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

## Cleaning Up

With Spring comes Spring-cleaning. We will be having the first of our museum clean-up days on Saturday May 28 from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Please drop in for a while and join our fun crew as we prepare to open the museum for the season and for the Penn Brook School third grade tour.

The Georgetown Historical Society  
 P/O. Box 373  
 Georgetown, MA 01833



## Georgetown Historical Society



### **Officers**

*President :* Chris Comiskey  
*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:* Terrance Hart  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:* TBD  
*Curator:* Steve Keene  
*Secretary:* Sylvia West  
*Treasurer:* Barry Crawford

### **Board of Directors**

*Louise Richardson*  
*Ed Des Jardins*  
*Chuck Keilty*  
*Ralph Chouinard*  
*Rick Detwiller*

- JOIN US ON FACEBOOK! Search Groups, “Georgetown Historical Society”.
- VISIT OUR WEBSITE: <[www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com) to see more information about GHS and upcoming events.
- EMAIL US AT: <[info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com)>>